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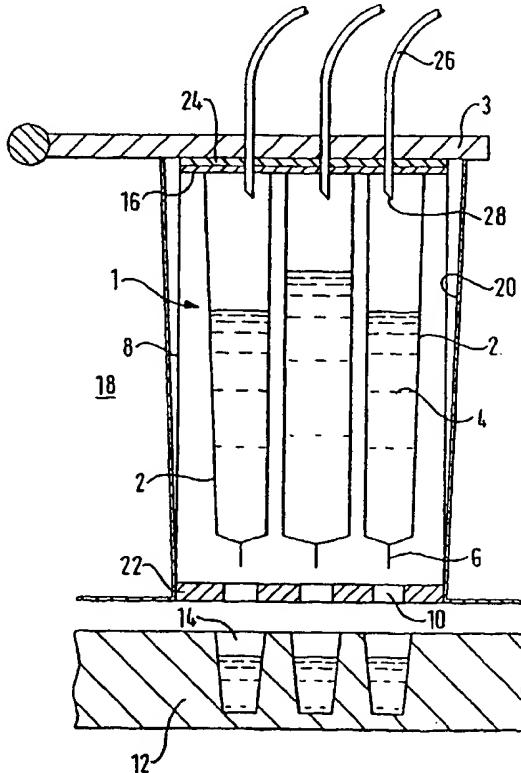
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(54) Title: LIQUID DISPENSING APPARATUS

(57) Abstract

A liquid dispensing apparatus comprises a liquid reservoir (32), an outlet port (6; 36) and driving means for forcing liquid (4) through the outlet port (6; 36). The driving means generates a pulse of gas which impinges upon the liquid (4) in the reservoir (32) so as to force liquid (4) through the outlet port (6; 36). Also disclosed is a cassette comprising a plurality of cartridges for dispensing liquid therefrom. Each cartridge comprises a liquid reservoir (32) and an outlet member (36) mounted so as to close an opening (34) in the liquid reservoir (32). The outlet member (36) provides an outlet port through which the liquid can be forced by a pulse of pressurised gas.



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Liquid Dispensing Apparatus

This invention relates to liquid dispensing
5 apparatus and in particular to liquid dispensing
apparatus which are able to dispense small volumes of
liquid.

In certain applications it is desirable to be able
to dispense very small volumes of liquid from a
10 container, for example in the range 10-500 nanolitres
(nl). Drops of this size cannot normally be produced by
pumping liquid out of a capillary since surface tension
will hold the drop to the tip of the capillary until it
is sufficiently large that its weight overcomes this
15 surface tension. This does not happen until the volume
of the drop is of the order of 10 to 50 microlitres -
i.e. 2 to 3 orders of magnitude greater than the range
of interest.

Devices are available which overcome this
20 limitation by forcing a measured amount of liquid
through the tip of a nozzle using a piezo-electric
actuator acting on the liquid. However such systems are
expensive and may only be used with a single type of
liquid at a time - thus multiplying the cost where
25 several different liquids need to be dispensed.

It is an object of the present invention to provide
an improved apparatus and when viewed from a first
aspect the invention provides a liquid dispensing
apparatus comprising a liquid reservoir, an outlet port
30 and driving means for forcing liquid through said outlet
port, said driving means comprising means for generating
a pulse of gas which impinges upon liquid in the
reservoir so as to force liquid through the outlet port.

Thus it will be seen that in accordance with the
35 invention liquid may be dispensed by forcing it through
the outlet port by means of a pulse of gas. The volume
of liquid dispensed may be controlled by adjusting the

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amplitude and duration of the gas pulse. It has been found that this enables accurate control of the volume dispersed, down to the order of 50-500 nl in the preferred embodiment. Furthermore as a gas is used as the medium for transmitting force to the liquid, it is not necessary for any part of the driving means to be in contact with the liquid to be dispensed. This has clear advantages both from the point of view of preventing contamination of the liquid and also the reduced necessity to clean the apparatus.

As the driving impulse is applied to liquid in the reservoir, it is not necessary to have any part of the driving means arranged in the vicinity of the outlet port. This means that the outlet port can be simple to manufacture and the outlet port may even be provided on a disposable member.

In one preferred arrangement in accordance with the invention, the outlet port is an integral part of the apparatus. In a particularly preferred embodiment one or both of the outlet port and the liquid reservoir are moulded from a suitable plastics material, thereby allowing them to be made disposable. More preferably the outlet port and liquid reservoir are both moulded from suitable plastics, most preferably integrally with each other, to form a cartridge. Alternatively such a cartridge could be made from one or more other suitable materials such as silica or stainless steel.

Cartridges of the kind described above may be provided singly, but preferably a plurality are provided in a cassette. Such an arrangement is novel and advantageous in itself and thus when viewed from a second aspect the present invention provides a cassette comprising a plurality of cartridges for dispensing liquid therefrom, each cartridge comprising an outlet port in the form of a protruding nozzle and a liquid reservoir integrally formed therewith. Preferably the cartridges are formed integrally

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with one another to form said cassette.

The invention makes it possible, at least in some preferred embodiments, to provide cartridges pre-filled with the necessary liquid and having the required outlet port formed integrally therewith. All that is necessary then is simply to place the liquid reservoir of the cartridge or each cartridge of a cassette of cartridges in gaseous communication with a means to generate gas pulses, in order to form a liquid dispensing apparatus. 5
in accordance with the first aspect of the invention. 10
This is extremely convenient to a user who thus does not need to be concerned with filling reservoirs with liquid, cleaning the outlet port etc. Indeed in at least preferred embodiments of this aspect of the invention, contact with the liquid to be dispensed may 15
be completely avoided.

In other preferred arrangements the outlet port is provided by a separate outlet member which is mounted so as to close an opening in the liquid reservoir. This is 20
advantageous since it allows the liquid reservoir and outlet member to be made from different materials each of which can be optimised for its function. For example, the dimensions of the liquid reservoir may be relatively uncritical and so it could be made relatively 25
inexpensively, e.g. as an injection moulded plastics component. On the other hand, the dimensions of the outlet port of the outlet member are likely to be more critical and it might for example be made to a tighter tolerance, e.g. from metal.

As above, the outlet member and liquid reservoir 30
preferably together form a cartridge, and in preferred embodiments a cassette comprising a plurality of such cartridges is provided. Thus when viewed from a further aspect the present invention provides a cassette 35
comprising a plurality of cartridges for dispensing liquid therefrom, each cartridge comprising a liquid reservoir and an outlet member mounted so as to close an

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opening in the liquid reservoir, said outlet member providing an outlet port through which said liquid can be forced by a pulse of pressurised gas.

Preferably at least the liquid reservoirs of said 5 cartridges are formed integrally with one another to form said cassette.

In some preferred embodiments the outlet port comprises a protruding nozzle, e.g. a capillary tube. The bore of such a nozzle is preferably within the range 10 0.05 to 0.2 mm, most preferably about 0.1 mm. The length of the nozzle is preferably in the range 1 to 15 mm, most preferably 5 mm.

More preferably, the outlet port comprises an aperture in a wall of the liquid reservoir. The 15 aperture is chosen in size to give the required volume of drop when a given pressure pulse is applied. The aperture however should be small enough that the surface tension in the liquid in the reservoir prevents it from leaking through.

20 In accordance with the first and second aspects of the invention, the wall of the liquid reservoir in which the aperture is provided may be integral with the reservoir but preferably it is a separate wall member mounted so as to close an opening in the liquid 25 reservoir.

Where, as is preferred, a plurality of cartridges together form a cassette, each may have its own such wall member or two or more of the cartridges may share a wall member with an aperture for each cartridge.

30 A single aperture may be provided for the or each liquid reservoir, or more may be provided to increase the volume that may be dispensed without increasing the size of the aperture (which could give rise to a greater probability of leaking).

35 The aperture could be any shape, but most conveniently it is round. However, if larger volumes of liquid are required an elongate slit could for example

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by employed.

In preferred embodiments the aperture is between 2 and 300 micrometers wide, preferably approximately 40 micrometers. If the aperture is a slit it could for 5 example be 40 x 500 micrometers.

The wall member could be made from any suitable material, e.g. plastics, metal, glass or ceramics. Preferably it has the opposite relationship to water as the liquid for which it is intended to be used, i.e. 10 preferably the member is hydrophilic if the liquid is hydrophobic and vice versa. It may have any suitable thickness, but preferably it is between 10 micrometers and 1000 micrometers (1 mm), most preferably approximately 50 micrometers.

15 The aperture may be formed by suitably precise technique e.g. etching, electroplating, laser drilling or mechanical drilling.

The wall member may be fixed to the or each liquid reservoir in any suitable manner e.g. gluing, ultrasonic 20 welding, friction welding etc. In one preferred embodiment the liquid reservoir tapers towards its open end and the wall member is pressed into an interference fit with the tapered end. The wall member therefore 25 preferably has the same peripheral shape as the liquid reservoir, most preferably this being round. The diameter of the wall member in such a case is preferably between 0.5 and 6 mm, most preferably approximately 2 mm.

30 The cartridge or each cartridge of a cassette may be filled with a suitable liquid prior to use, e.g. a lyophilised reagent which is dissolved in water when required. The preferred embodiments of the invention in which the liquid reservoir is adjacent the outlet port are advantageous in this context since just the required 35 amount of reagent can be made up as required without extra being required to accommodate dead space in pipes etc.

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Cassettes of cartridges in accordance with the invention as described above are useful in many applications including but not limited to immuno assays, cell assay, drug screening and they are particularly 5 useful for sequencing DNA using the method often referred to as "Sequencing By Synthesis" as they allow for example a cassette having cartridges containing each of the four nucleotides required for DNA sequencing. Preferably therefore the cartridges respectively contain 10 one or more nucleotides. The ability to provide a plurality of cartridges in a single cassette further allows a complete set of reagents required for a sequencing programme to be provided. Thus preferably further cartridges of the cassette respectively contain 15 one or more enzymes, more preferably selected from a group comprising polymerase, luciferase, adenosine triphosphate (ATP) sulfurylase, and a nucleotide-degrading enzyme such as apyrase. Such a set of reagents is particularly useful for the method of 20 genetic sequencing set out in WO 98/13523. Indeed it will be appreciated that the invention extends to a method of genetic sequencing using a liquid dispensing apparatus or cassette as herein described.

As discussed above, cartridges of the kind 25 described above may be filled by a user with the appropriate liquid as required. Alternatively the cartridge or each cartridge of a cassette is pre-filled with the appropriate liquid and sealed, the seal being broken upon mounting the cartridge into an apparatus 30 which includes the gas pulse generation means. Preferably the seal is broken by the action of mounting the cartridge into the apparatus. Advantageously a conduit for establishing gaseous communication with the interior of the liquid reservoir of the cartridge breaks 35 the seal.

It will be seen from the above that a sealed cartridge containing a liquid to be dispensed by means

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of apparatus in accordance with the first aspect of the invention is in itself not only novel, but particularly convenient for a user and thus when viewed from a further aspect the present invention provides a 5 cartridge comprising a liquid reservoir having a predetermined liquid received therein, said reservoir being closed at one end thereof by frangible sealing means, and an outlet port attached to or integrally formed with said reservoir and in fluid communication therewith.

10 As an alternative it will be seen that the invention extends to a cartridge for use in a liquid dispensing apparatus as hereinbefore described comprising a liquid reservoir, and an outlet port attached to or integrally formed with said reservoir and 15 in fluid communication therewith, in combination with a reagent, preferably a nucleotide or enzyme.

The reagent e.g. nucleotide or enzyme could be in a suitable liquid form or could be lyophilised. In the 20 latter case a readily available diluent such as water could be used, or a suitable diluent could instead also be provided as part of the combination.

The frangible sealing means preferably comprises a foil membrane e.g. of aluminium covering an opening onto 25 the reservoir. This is a cost-effective way of retaining liquid in the reservoir without it becoming contaminated, whilst at the same time being relatively easy to pierce - e.g. by a gas nozzle associated with the gas pulse generation means.

30 The predetermined liquid preferably comprises a nucleotide or an enzyme.

Where an enzyme is provided, either as the predetermined liquid in a pre-filled cartridge or as a separate reagent to be added by a user, the enzyme is 35 preferably selected from a group comprising polymerase, luciferase, adenosine triphosphate (ATP) sulfurylase, and a nucleotide-degrading enzyme such as apyrase.

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The means for generating the gas pulses may comprise any suitable means - e.g. a bellows arranged to undergo a rapid reduction in volume. Preferably however the pulse generation means comprises a source of 5 pressurised gas which may be selectively placed into communication with the liquid reservoir. Such arrangements are especially beneficial since a single source of pressurised gas may be used to drive a plurality of liquid reservoirs, thereby giving a 10 significant saving in cost over arrangements where driving means are individually provided for each of a number of nozzles. Means for selectively placing the liquid reservoir into communication with the source of gas may be provided for each of such liquid reservoirs 15 or two or more of them may be associated with a single selection means so that their contents are dispensed simultaneously.

Preferably one or more valves is provided to effect said selective communication and in the preferred 20 embodiment an electromagnetic valve is used. This is particularly advantageous since electromagnetic valves can be operated very quickly and accurately with little mechanical wear.

Where, as is preferred, the apparatus for 25 dispensing liquid comprises gas pulse generation means in the form of means for selectively communicating a source of pressurised gas with the liquid reservoir, the source of pressurised gas may be comprised within the apparatus. Most preferably the source of pressurised 30 gas comprises a compressor supplying a pressure reservoir. Alternatively, the apparatus may comprise a gas inlet for connection to an external source of pressurised gas. In either case the apparatus of the invention preferably comprises means to regulate the 35 pressure of the incoming gas thereby allowing the amplitude of the pulses generated to be accurately controlled and thus the volume of liquid to be

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accurately controlled as a consequence. The pressure regulation means may comprise a mechanical release valve or the like. Preferably however such means comprises an electronic pressure sensor which is used to monitor the 5 pressure in the reservoir or gas inlet and means for increasing or decreasing said pressure in response to the signal from the pressure sensor to maintain the pressure within a predetermined range.

The gas pulse generation means preferably generates 10 pressure pulses having an amplitude in the range 200 to 1000 millibars, with a pulse width in the range 1-1000 milliseconds. This enables volumes in the range 50 nl to 10000 nl (10 μ l) to be dispensed.

Certain preferred embodiments of the present 15 invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:-

Figure 1 is a schematic view of a cassette of cartridges and liquid dispensing apparatus in accordance with the invention; and

20 Figure 2 is a cross-section through a cartridge in accordance with a second embodiment of the invention.

Turning to Figure 1 there may be seen a liquid dispensing apparatus comprising a cartridge cassette designated generally by the reference numeral 1. This 25 cassette contains eight cartridges 2, three of which are visible in the drawing. Each cartridge 2 is partly filled with a reagent 4 used for genetic sequencing. The volume of the cartridges is approximately 2 ml. Different reagents 4 are provided in each cartridge 2. Specifically, four of the cartridges 2 contain the deoxynucleotide triphosphate of one each of the four bases cytosine, guanine, adenine and thymine. Four further cartridges 2 contain polymerase, luciferase, apyrase and ATP sulfurylase. Equally however some or 30 all of the cartridges could have the same contents.

At the end of each cartridge 2 there is a capillary nozzle 6. This nozzle has a bore of 0.1 mm. In the

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depicted embodiment the nozzle 6 is integrally moulded with the rest of the cartridge 2 from a polymer.

However the cartridge could be formed with means to receive a separate nozzle.

5 The cassette 1 has an outer case 8 which protects the cartridges 2 from contamination by the user handling them and conversely protects the user from having to come into contact with the liquid being dispensed or the very fine, i.e. sharp nozzles 6. Apertures 10 are
10 provided in the base of the cassette casing 8 which are aligned with the nozzles 6 to allow the liquid through.

15 At the upper end of the cassette 1 a thin metal foil 16 is provided over the tops of the cartridges 2 to seal them. The foil 16 extends across the open upper end of the cassette 1 formed by the side walls of the casing 8, but slightly downwardly set from the top edge so as to leave an upstanding lip around the top of the foil 16.

20 The cassette 1 is installed in a carriage 18 which can be moved laterally in both directions over a Micro Titre Plate (MTP) 12. The MTP has 96 wells 14, three of which are shown. The cassette 1 is actually received in a downwardly tapering chamber 20, so as to rest on an apertured plate 22, the apertures of which are in alignment with the apertures 10 in the cassette and, 25 when the carriage 18 is properly positioned, also with the wells 14 of the MTP 12.

30 The cassette 1 is retained in the chamber 20 by means of a hinged lid 3, having a rubber seal 24 on its underside which is a tight fit inside the lip at the top edge of cassette casing 8. The seal 24 is arranged also to ensure that the cartridges 2 are sealed with respect to one another as well as with respect to the lid 3.

35 Mounted in the lid 3 is an array of punching cannulae 28, one for each of the cartridges 2. These cannulae 28 have sharp tips and so as the lid 3 is hinged downwardly onto the cassette 1 in the chamber 20,

the cannulae 28 pierce the foil seal 28. The other ends 11
of the cannulae are each connected by means of a pipe 26
to an electromagnetic valve (not shown) which
selectively connects the pipe 26 to a source of
pressurised gas for a predetermined time to produce a
pulse of gas. The pressurised gas is generated by a
compressor type EC Genius/M 202 2305 EU.SV.C which is
commercially available from Fini, Zola, Predosa, Bo'
Italy.

The pulse of gas forces a measured amount of
reagent 4 out of the cartridge 2, through the nozzle 6
and into the corresponding well 14 on the MTP 12. A
500 millibar pulse, for 10 milliseconds dispenses
approximately 200 nanolitres of reagent into the well
14. Reagent is only dispensed from one of the
cartridges 2 at a time although simultaneous dispensing
is also possible and this could be useful e.g. where a
plate having a greater number of wells was used with an
interleaved series of wells used so that dispensing into
the wells of several distinct series can be carried out
20 without moving the carriage 18.

Once the reagents in the cartridges have been used,
and replaced with a new one, the lid 3
25 broken by the cannulae 28. Since neither the cannulae
28 nor any other permanent part of the apparatus comes
into contact with the reagents at any stage, there is
little chance of contamination and it is not necessary
to clean the apparatus between uses, even if different
reagents are being used.

Figure 2 shows part of the cartridge 30 of another
30 embodiment of the invention. It will be seen that the
liquid reservoir 32 tapers at its lower end 32a to form
an opening circumscribed by an annular lip 34. The
reservoir 32 and lip 34 are integrally formed in
35 injection moulded plastics. The bottom opening is closed
by a thin metallic foil disc 36 which has a central

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aperture drilled into it. The disc 36 is pressed into the end of the liquid reservoir 32 thereby forming a fluid-tight interference fit. The disc is 2 mm in diameter and 50 micrometers thick. The aperture is 5 essentially circular with a diameter of approximately 40 micrometers. This is sufficiently small to prevent any leakage of liquid from the reservoir 32.

This embodiment operates in exactly the same way as the embodiment already described, although it will be 10 appreciated that it has the additional benefits that the size of the aperture is easier to control precisely than is the bore of the capillary tube, and furthermore there is no potentially hazardous sharp tip.

Although embodiments of the invention having a 15 cassette comprising several cartridges have been described, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that the invention is not limited to using several cartridges and that a single cartridge reservoir could be used instead. Furthermore, the liquid reservoir need 20 not be removable and could instead be an integral part of the apparatus.

Claims:

1. A cassette comprising a plurality of cartridges for dispensing liquid therefrom, each cartridge comprising a liquid reservoir and an outlet member mounted so as to close an opening in the liquid reservoir, said outlet member providing an outlet port through which said liquid can be forced by a pulse of pressurised gas.
- 10 2. A cassette as claimed in claim 1 wherein at least the liquid reservoirs of said cartridges are formed integrally with one another.
- 15 3. A cassette as claimed in claim 1 or 2 wherein said outlet port comprises an aperture in said outlet member.
4. A cassette as claimed in claim 1 or 2 wherein said outlet port comprises a protruding nozzle.
- 20 5. A liquid dispensing apparatus comprising a liquid reservoir, an outlet port and driving means for forcing liquid through said outlet port, said driving means comprising means for generating a pulse of gas which impinges upon liquid in the reservoir so as to force liquid through the outlet port.
- 25 6. An apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein said outlet port is formed integrally with the or each liquid reservoir.
- 30 7. An apparatus as claimed in claim 5 wherein said outlet port is provided by a separate outlet member which is mounted so as to close an opening in the liquid reservoir.
- 35 8. An apparatus as claimed in claims 5, 6 or 7 wherein said outlet port and liquid reservoir are moulded from

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plastics to form a cartridge.

9. An apparatus as claimed in claim 8 comprising a cassette, said cassette comprising a plurality of said cartridges.

10. An apparatus as claimed in any of claims 5 to 9 wherein the pulse generation means comprises a source of pressurised gas which may be selectively placed into communication with the liquid reservoir.

11. An apparatus as claimed in claim 10 wherein one or more electromagnetic valves is provided to effect said selective communication.

15 12. An apparatus as claimed in any of claims 5 to 11 wherein said gas pulse generation means is arranged to generate pulses having an amplitude in the range 200 to 1000 millibars.

20 13. An apparatus as claimed in any of claims 5 to 12 wherein said gas pulse generation means is arranged to generate pulses having a width in the range 1 to 1000 milliseconds.

25 14. An apparatus as claimed in any of claims 5 to 13 wherein the or each outlet port comprises a protruding nozzle.

30 15. A cassette or apparatus as claimed in any of claims 5 to 13 wherein said outlet port comprises an aperture in a wall of the liquid reservoir.

35 16. A cassette or apparatus as claimed in claim 3 or 15 wherein said aperture has a width of between 2 and 300 micrometers.

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17. A cassette comprising a plurality of cartridges for dispensing liquid therefrom, each cartridge comprising an outlet port in the form of a protruding nozzle and a liquid reservoir integrally formed with the outlet port.

5

18. An apparatus or cassette as claimed in any preceding claim wherein the or each liquid reservoir contains a quantity of liquid and is closed at one end thereof by a frangible sealing means.

10

19. A cartridge comprising a liquid reservoir having a predetermined liquid received therein, said reservoir being closed at one end thereof by frangible sealing means, and a nozzle attached to or integrally formed 15 with said reservoir and in fluid communication therewith.

20. An apparatus, cartridge or cassette as claimed in claim 18 or 19 wherein said frangible sealing means comprises a foil membrane.

21. An apparatus, cartridge or cassette as claimed in any preceding claim wherein said liquid reservoir contains a nucleotide or enzyme.

25

22. An apparatus, cartridge or cassette as claimed in claim 21 wherein said liquid receiving reservoir contains an enzyme selected from a group comprising polymerase, luciferase, adenosine triphosphate (ATP) 30 sulfurylase, and a nucleotide-degrading enzyme such as apyrase.

23. A liquid dispensing apparatus including a cassette or cartridge as claimed in any of claims 1 to 4 or 15 to 35 22.

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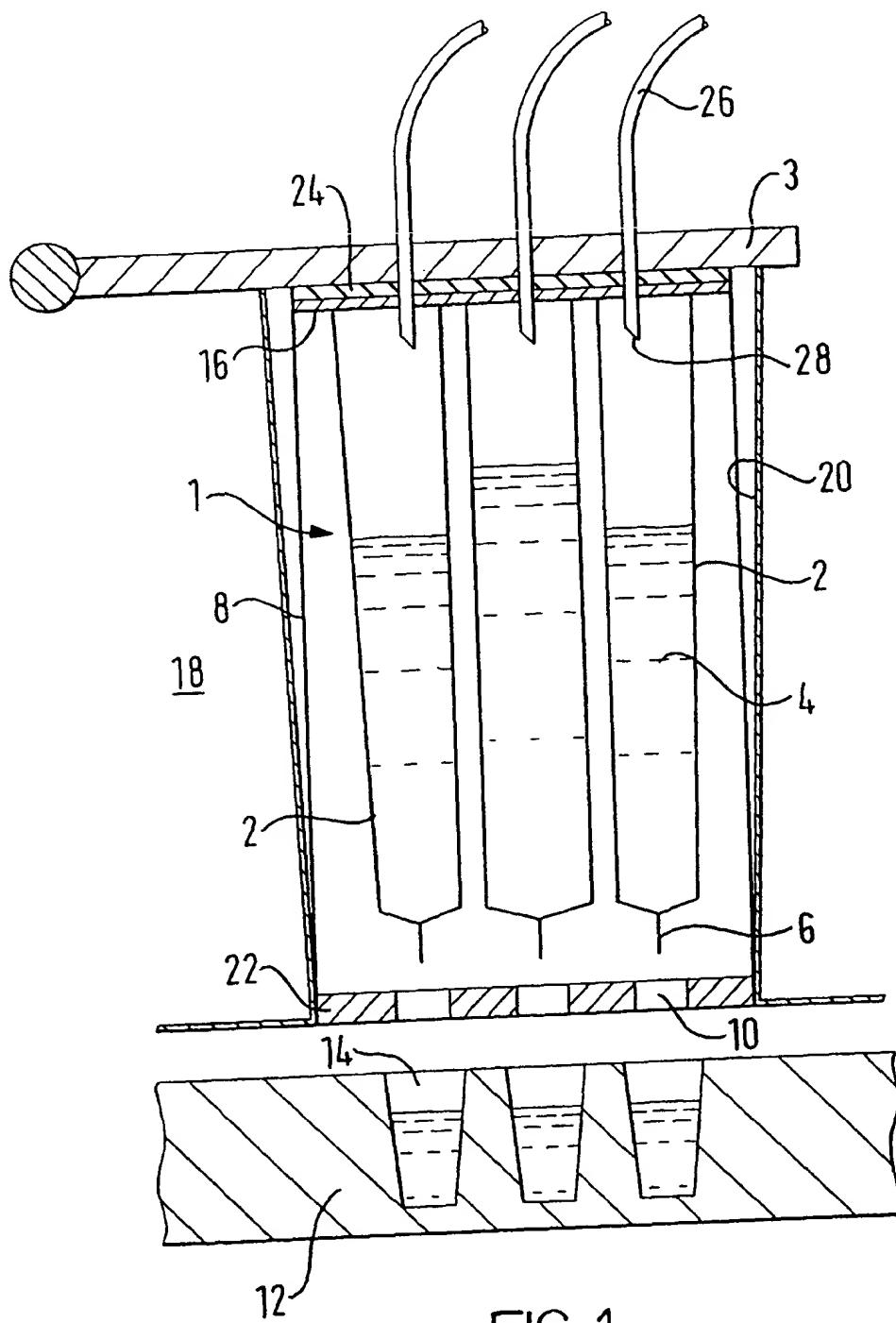


FIG. 1

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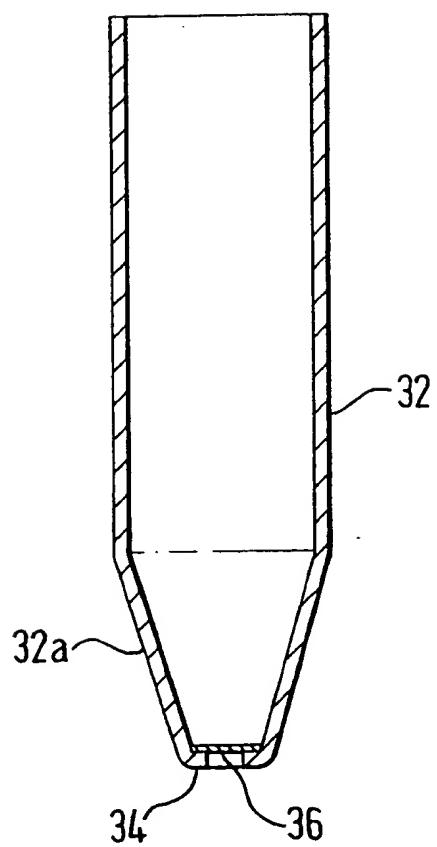


FIG. 2

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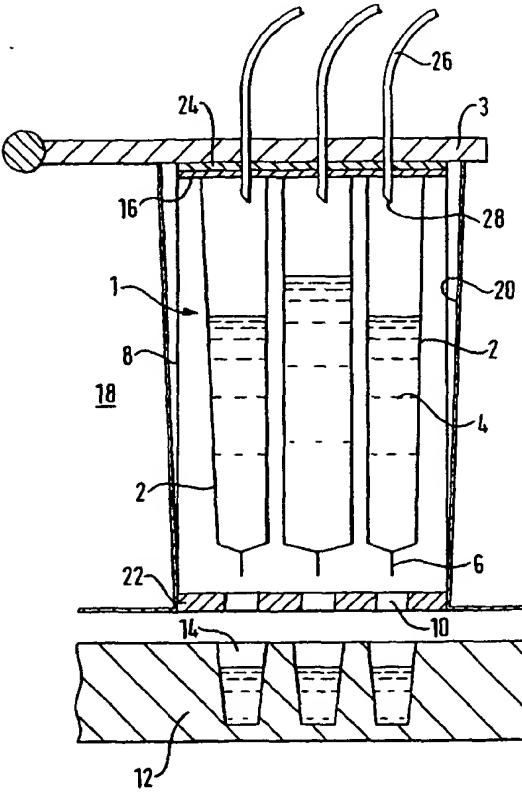
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(54) Title: PRESSURE-PULSE ACTUATED LIQUID DISPENSING APPARATUS



WO 00/56455 A3



(57) Abstract: A liquid dispensing apparatus comprises a liquid reservoir (32), an outlet port (6; 36) and driving means for forcing liquid (4) through the outlet port (6; 36). The driving means generates a pulse of gas which impinges upon the liquid (4) in the reservoir (32) so as to force liquid (4) through the outlet port (6; 36). Also disclosed is a cassette comprising a plurality of cartridges for dispensing liquid therefrom. Each cartridge comprises a liquid reservoir (32) and an outlet member (36) mounted so as to close an opening (34) in the liquid reservoir (32). The outlet member (36) provides an outlet port through which the liquid can be forced by a pulse of pressurised gas.



(AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent
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MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM,
GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

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For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/GB 00/01029

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER IPC 7 B01L3/02		//B01J19/00,C12Q1/68
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
B. FIELDS SEARCHED		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) IPC 7 B01L G01N B01J C12Q C12M B05C B67D		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)		
C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 5 435 462 A (FUJII HIDEYO) 25 July 1995 (1995-07-25)	1-3,19, 20,23
A	column 1, line 46 -column 4, line 4 figure 1 ---	17,18
A	WO 98 20020 A (KOSTER HUBERT ;LITTLE DANIEL P (US); SEQUENOM INC (US); CANTOR CHA) 14 May 1998 (1998-05-14) page 13, line 15 -page 13, line 18 page 51, line 1 -page 51, line 12 page 52, line 12 -page 54, line 11 figure 2 ---	1-4,17, 23
		-/-
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patent family members are listed in annex.
* Special categories of cited documents :		
A document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance		
E earlier document but published on or after the international filing date		
L document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)		
O document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means		
P document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed		
T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention		
X document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone		
Y document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.		
& document member of the same patent family		
Date of the actual completion of the international search	Date of mailing of the international search report	
8 June 2000	18.06.00	
Name and mailing address of the ISA European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel: (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016	Authorized officer Koch, A	

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
PCT/GB 00/01029

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 98 29736 A (GENOMETRIX INC) 9 July 1998 (1998-07-09) page 10, line 6 -page 10, line 21 page 15, line 10 -page 15, line 14 page 21, line 6 -page 21, line 10 page 22, line 12 -page 22, line 27 page 23, line 16 -page 24, line 21 page 27, line 10 -page 27, line 28 page 42, line 21 -page 43, line 8 page 44, line 12 -page 44, line 20 page 61, line 20 -page 62, line 11 figure 4 -----	1,4

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/GB 00/01029

Box I Observations where certain claims were found unsearchable (Continuation of item 1 of first sheet)

This International Search Report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons:

1. Claims Nos.: because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:

2. Claims Nos.: because they relate to parts of the International Application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful International Search can be carried out, specifically:

3. Claims Nos.: because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of Rule 6.4(a).

Box II Observations where unity of invention is lacking (Continuation of item 2 of first sheet)

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application, as follows:

see additional sheet(s)

1. As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers all searchable claims.

2. As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, this Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.

3. As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this International Search Report covers only those claims for which fees were paid, specifically claims Nos.:

4. No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this International Search Report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claims Nos.:

1-4,17-20,23

Remark on Protest

The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest.

No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM PCT/ISA/ 210

1. Claims: 1-4,17-20,23

Cassette with plurality of cartridges for dispensing liquid therefrom, the cartridge being closed at one end and having an outlet port from which liquid is ejected by a pulse of pressurised gas.

2. Claims: 5-16,21,22

Liquid dispensing apparatus with liquid reservoir, outlet port and driving means for generating a pulse of gas in order to force the liquid out of the outlet port.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/GB 00/01029

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)		Publication date
US 5435462	A	25-07-1995	NONE		

WO 9820020	A	14-05-1998	US	6024925 A	15-02-2000
			AU	5106998 A	29-05-1998
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			WO	9820019 A	14-05-1998

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			EP	0990142 A	05-04-2000
